WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

CITY AND COUNTY OF NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

TO THE

SANITARY COMMITTEE,

ON

SCHOOLS

AND THE

NOTIFICATION OF MEASLES AND WHOOPING COUGH.

APRIL, 1896.

Newcastle-upon-Tyne:
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NOTIFICATION OF MEASLES AND WHOOPING COUGH.

Extracts from the Reports of the Medical Officer of Health for the Fortnights ending respectively 7th and 21st March, 1896.

School Closure.

The prevalence of Measles and Whooping Cough among the scholars at the St. Peter's Board School having been reported to the Health Department Sub-Committee, the Medical Officer of Health was instructed to communicate with the Head Master of the school, and did so. The reply of Mr. Curry, Head Master, is submitted. From this letter it appears that there are no less than 264 cases of Measles and 35 of Whooping Cough among the scholars or their families. There are only eight cases of Scarlet Fever among the pupils of the school. Infectious sickness, 86 per cent. of which is Measles, is causing an absence of 46 per cent. of the Infants, and 25 per cent. of the rest of the scholars.

As the Committee are aware, the only information as to Measles and Whooping Cough systematically forwarded to the Health Department is that contained in the Death Registers. During the 10 weeks ended 7th March last, 22 deaths from Measles in the City have been returned, of which eight occurred in the last of these weeks, and four in the week before. 16 of the 22 deaths occurred in the Registration District of Byker.

With regard to the prevalence of Measles among the children of the St. Peter's Board School, Mr. Curry significantly remarks "many of the parents seem very careless and indifferent, sending their children back too soon, and in many cases actually sending some to school while others are ill at home. I am constantly finding cases of the latter, notwithstanding that we repeat in school daily 'no children must attend school if there is Measles at home.'" This shews one way in which measures for limiting the spread of infection might have been taken by the Health Department, had the cases been notified as they occur. Failing this, there is little hope of preventing the evil of which Mr. Curry complains, short of closing the school for a time, the advisibility of which is commended to the consideration of the Committee.

During the 12 weeks ended 21st March last, the deaths from Measles and Whooping Cough in the City have been as under :—

Week ended	No. of Deaths from		Total.
	Measles.	Whooping Cough.	
1896.			
January 4 ...	1	3	4
,, 11 ...	1	4	5
,, 18 ...	2	2	4
,, 25 ...	1	3	4
February 1 ..	2	3	5
,, 8 ...	...	2	2
,, 15 ...	2	4	6
,, 22 ..	1	3	4
,, 29 ...	4	2	6
March 7 ...	8	2	10
,, 14 ...	8	...	8
,, 21 ...	6	2	8
Totals ...	36	30	66

27 of the deaths from Measles occurred in Byker Registration District.

During the year 1895, 140 deaths occurred from Measles and 57 from Whooping Cough.

The deaths from other infectious diseases during the same period, were as follows :—

Scarlet Fever	26
Diphtheria	49
Enteric Fever	48
Typhus and Continued Fever ...	—
Total	123*

Regulations as to Closure of Public Elementary Schools in order to prevent the spread of Disease.

A copy of a Memorandum of the Local Government Board on the Closure, &c., of Public Elementary Schools on account of infectious disease is submitted, from which (Art. 6) it will be observed that such closure is indicated "if in a large majority of households attacked, the first case be a child attending school." Of seventeen different households visited, having children recently absent from St. Peter's Board School on account of Measles, the first cases of Measles in twelve of the families were those of children attending the school at the time of attack.

The points on which to determine between exclusion of the children of infected houses from a school, and the closure of such school, are set forth in Articles 9 and 10 of the Memorandum of the Local Government Board. According to these, the large percentage of absentees from St. Peter's School, as shewn in the last fortnightly report, justifies the Sanitary Authority in requiring the closure of the school for a time.

The practical effect of school closure in limiting the spread of Measles in Birkenhead and Coventry, is clearly shewn by the Medical Officers of Health of those towns in publications submitted :—

* Includes deaths in the City Hospital for Infectious Diseases of persons belonging to the City.

*The following is extracted from the Annual Report for 1894 of the Medical Officer of Health for Coventry :—**

"The Coventry experience, so far as I can read it, proves "unmistakeably that the schools play a most important part in the "dissemination of the disease, and their closure has invariably been "followed by a marked and significant reduction in the number of "cases coming to notice, and subsequently by a complete cessation "of the outbreak. If the epidemic is at all general, all schools "must be closed if the measure is to be effective. Closure of "infant schools, or the partial closure of the more infected ones, is "useless. Last year, when the general closing order was made, the "teachers of Radford School protested that they had no cases, their "examination was pending, and they were isolated from Coventry. "Under the circumstances the school was allowed to remain open "but in less than three weeks 66 per cent. of the children were "away in consequence of the disease, and the managers applied to "have the compulsory closing order applied to the school.

"The following are the weekly returns of the cases notified "just previous and subsequent to the general closure:—

Week ending	March.		April.				May.		
	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19
	162	213	275	492	306	260	134	88	42
	Schools open.				Schools closed.				

"The closing order was made upon the 3rd of April, but "owing to the examination arrangements which were proceeding "some of the largest schools did not close until late in the week "ending the 14th of that month. The subsequent diminution in "the weekly returns tells its own tale, and hardly needs comment.

"In this connection, the experience of the epidemics of 1886 "and 1889 is so conclusive that it is worth reproducing.

* The opinion of the Medical Officer of Health of Birkenhead is given on p. 8.

"From Medical Officer's Annual Reports (Coventry) for the "years 1886 and 1889":—

1886. Cases of Measles recorded.			1889. Cases of Measles recorded.		
January to August ...	81	Schools open.	January to June ...	186	Schools open
September	361		July 1st to 25th ...	629	
October (1st fortnight)	186		July 25th to Aug. 10th,	218	Schools closed.
October (2nd fortnight)	111	Schools closed.	Aug. 10th to Sept. 1st,	74	
November	10		September	17	

Notification of Measles and Whooping Cough.

Through the courtesy of the Medical Officer to the Local Government Board, the Medical Officer of Health of Newcastle-upon-Tyne has obtained a return of 55 districts in which Measles, and 14 in which Whooping Cough, has been added to the list of notifiable diseases. The return states that in 23 additional cases Measles, and five others Whooping Cough, has been added and subsequently revoked. A circular has been sent to the Medical Officers of Health of 22 districts (including some in the above list and others) having a population of 20,000 or upwards, asking whether such notification had been found of any use in limiting the spread of disease. Up to date 16* replies have come to hand, from which it appears that in five instances the notification of Measles has been withdrawn on account of expense or for other reasons. In five districts applied to it has not been adopted. In the six towns where it is in force (Edinburgh, Birkenhead, Withington, Coventry, Hull, and Blackpool) it is found useful in limiting the spread of infection. Edinburgh and Blackpool have tried it for 16, and Birkenhead for 14 years. Published statements are submitted of the results of the notification of Measles in Blackpool,† Birkenhead, and Coventry,‡ all of which testify strongly to its efficacy.

* Since the above was written one additional reply has been received (Stretford Urban District). Measles notification has been in force there for twelve months, but the Medical Officer of Health does not consider that time long enough to judge of its efficacy in limiting the spread of infection.

† Public Health, 1892-3, p. 207.

‡ Annual Report for 1894 of the Medical Officer of Health of Coventry, quoted on p. 6.

Extracts from paper on "Twelve years' experience of the Notification of Measles," by R. Sydney Marsden, M.B., Medical Officer of Health for Birkenhead. 1894.

"In early outbreaks, limited to small areas, notification is "most valuable for the following reasons:—It enables a Medical "Officer, who acts promptly in the matter, by visiting the house "affected, and warning the relatives of the dangers run by "exposure of the patient, followed up by a prompt prosecution if "such exposure is found out, to isolate the case to some extent; and "if no other good comes of it, as Dr. Bostock Hill has pointed out, "exposure of the patient to chill is prevented in many cases, with "the result that the mortality is diminished. Further, by closing "the schools in the affected district a very great deal may be done "to check the spread of the disease. I have, in my own experi- "ence, limited the area of infection and stopped an epidemic in "one instance by such means as those mentioned above, and, in a "second instance, I believe I succeeded in limiting the number "of cases to a certain degree. There are years, however, when the "outbreak appears to be general in every part of a district, and "under those conditions I do not think that notification helps you "to stop the spread of the epidemic to any large extent.

"There are, however, other advantages of notification, for "example, where it is important that the house should be under "special surveillance, as where a case arises in a milk shop, "confectioner's, or other food supply store of a similar description.

"Our experience, therefore, of the notification of Measles is, "that the advantages derived from such notification fully justify "the continuance of it. and more than counterbalance the dis- "advantages of cost and trouble involved by such a course.

Notification of Measles in Birkenhead.

	1882	1883	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893
Mortality per cent. of notified cases ..	5·52	7·28	4·25	7·79	3·69	6·07	1·83	5·77	5·49	6·48	4·08	2·77
Measles death rate per 1000 living of population ..	0·39	0·45	0·44	0·85	0·23	0·86	0·15	0·62	0·90	0·33	0·61	0·14

Extract from paper on "The Notification of Measles," by Dr. A. J. Anderson, Medical Officer of Health for Blackpool. Read before the North Western Branch of the Society of Medical Officers of Health, February, 1893.—"Public Health," Vol. 5, p. 209.

"I contend, by receiving early information of the occurrence "of cases of Measles, we are enabled to materially influence its "spread, and to reduce the fear of infection to a minimum.

"My experience of a mild epidemic in 1891 was that by "isolation in hospital and at home I could keep the disease in "check.

"Another great advantage of having Measles a notifiable "disease is that it is not possible to cloak cases of Scarlet Fever, "and afterwards get out of the difficulty by saying that it was "considered to be Measles.

"In my opinion the expense of Measles notification would "not amount to more than £1 per 1,000 inhabitants per annum."

In one district (Cardiff Rural), named in the return from the Local Government Board, Whooping Cough is notified compulsorily, and the report of its results is favourable.

The attention of the Committee is directed to sections 74 to 78 (inclusive) of the Newcastle Improvement Act, 1892, which impose a penalty on guardians or teachers permitting children to attend school from houses where there is infectious disease, and prohibit the attendance at school of scholars and teachers whilst living in such houses until the disinfection thereof has been duly certified; and further require the notification of infectious disease in the families of children attending school from outside the City. It is desirable that the attention of school authorities should be drawn to these provisions. Whether the notification of Measles and Whooping Cough is adopted by the Sanitary Authority or not, the Committee are recommended to consider the propriety of extending the definition of the term "infectious disease" so as to include Measles and Whooping Cough for the purposes of the special sections of the Act here referred to.

HENRY E. ARMSTRONG,
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

Health Department,
Town Hall,
4th April, 1896.